
EDITORIALS

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A better approach to lake water use

Other states have managed to enact legislation limiting water withdrawals from their sections of the Great Lakes that conforms with the binding 2008 Great Lakes Compact.

But Ohio seems to be stuck in a time warp, with some lawmakers still in denial about the need to protect the region's most precious natural asset. They apparently would prefer to transform Lake Erie into a resource to be plundered for profit.

Shame on state Sen. Tim Grendell, of Chesterland, and a fellow Republican, Rep. Lynn Wachtmann, of Napoleon in Northwest Ohio, for using the cloak of "enabling" legislation for the compact to try to turn the shallowest and the most biologically productive of the Great Lakes into an inviting beverage can for private interests.

That cannot be allowed to happen. Senate Bill 170 and House Bill 231 should die a deserved death in committee.

Luckily, there's an alternative. State Rep. Dennis Murray of Sandusky has teamed up with fellow Democrat Sen. Michael Skindell of Lakewood to introduce House Bill 257 and Senate Bill 186, to ensure proper stewardship of the entire Lake Erie basin. Their proposals require an assessment process using objective, quantitative standards for measuring the impact of water withdrawals and setting reasonable thresholds for when a water user must seek a permit.

In the bipartisan spirit of the compact — an agreement ratified by all eight Great Lakes states, approved by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush — the GOP-controlled legislature should torpedo Wachtmann and Grendell, and weigh anchor on Murray and Skindell.